Contradictions of Thomas Jefferson

* Champion of Enlightenment principles but never freed himself of the prejudices of the society (like regarding slavery)
* Called for an end to the slave trade and the institution but owned slaves (and didn’t free them after his death)
* Believed slaves were dependent on the white man while being dependent on them for most of his life
* Thought slaves were inferior yet had close relations with them on a familiar level
* Thought local control was better than a large expansive government, yet as President he didn’t dismantle key programs that were created by the Federalists.
* Believed in the “strict” interpretation of the Constitution, yet did unconstitutional things as President that he thought benefited the country as a while (namely the Louisiana Purchase).
* Believed the United States should not get involved in foreign entanglements but created the navy and fought over trivial matters
* Championed civil liberties and unalienable rights but used extra-constitutional methods to arrest and prosecute individuals who participated in the Burr Conspiracy.
* Supported tariffs and duties to protect American businesses despite fighting against the same things when England proposed it.
* Believed in democracy but distrusted what the people decided (too easily corrupted)
* Believed that agricultural workers defined what it was to be an American (representation of independence), despite embracing the trappings of the merchant class
* Believed in “all men are created equal” but that did not include women
* Thought that people should be free to make their own choices but sought to assimilate Native Americans into civilization
* Heavily religious but did not support religion entering into the public sphere

Was a FFV

William and Mary Grad

Library of Congress

Architect, Lawyer